P.T. gen info
1 of 3 SCS

Ukiah, Mendocino County, California Tuesday, August 23, 1977

729

Stoen reacts to Grapevine article

Ukiah weekly target of $5 million lawsuit

By GEORGE HUNTER

Timothy Oliver "Tim" Stoen, former assistant district attorney for Mendocino County whose beliefs are closely linked to those of the Rev. Jim Jones, pastor of the Peoples Temple Church, is preparing to file a $5 million lawsuit against the Mendocino Grapevine, a Ukiah weekly.

Stoen, who flew here last weekend from New York City to confer with Ukiah attorney Pat Finnegan, told the Daily Journal that he would also seek damages of some $13 million from New West, a San Francisco bi-weekly magazine which has carried two "expose" articles relating to Peoples Temple and its pastor.

Stoen said that an article appearing in a recent issue of the Ukiah weekly had damaged his reputation. "I intend to practice law here in Ukiah and it is essential that I clear my name," Stoen said.

"I must show the world that a newspaper cannot wrongfully hurt innocent people without being brought to account."

Noting that he was prepared to do battle on all levels, Stoen said: "I'm a street fighter. People will come to appreciate that fact that I'm a street fighter.

"I feel like Alfred Dreyfus," Stoen said, referring to the French Army officer of the 19th century who was convicted by an Army court and imprisoned on Devil's Island for defending his religious beliefs.

"I'm experienced enough with our jury system to believe in it. I'll put my trust in the system," Stoen said.

Stoen reacted strongly to inferences that he was "afraid" of Rev. Jones. "I want to dispel that allegation," he said.

The former assistant district attorney also was sharply critical to charges that he had used his public office to spy for Jones. "I've always made known my esteem for Jim Jones," he said. "I have nothing to hide and no one can show a single instance where I ever used my public office to show favoritism toward the church.

Stoen charged that the reporting of New West magazine was irresponsible in that the magazine article quoted the Mendocino Grapevine verbatim. Stoen said he would prove the statements to be untrue and malicious in motivation and that the Grapevine violated the newspaper canon of ethics, giving Stoen no chance to reply to the accusations.

The demands for retraction and damages will be contained in a complaint filed here. The suit against New West magazine will be filed in San Francisco.

Stoen was "loaned" to San Francisco city and county in 1975 to prosecute voter fraud after a large-scale scandal surfaced. Out of 39 indictments returned by the Grand jury, 37 convictions were obtained. Stoen was then asked by San Francisco District Attorney Joseph Freitas to accept the post of special prosecutor with a large staff of attorneys to fight organized crime and public corruption. Stoen accepted the post then resigned when he felt that he was needed in Guyana, a small South American country, to help Jones in establishing a communal-type center, Jonestown, for minorities and the underprivileged.

Stoen has established residence in Manhattan in order that he may be admitted to the New York State bar.

"Jones has helped me develop an empathy toward the persecuted," Stoen said. "I intend to develop a national law firm to help people who are prosecuted, on some pretext, for their religious beliefs. Stoen said he was worried about "creeping totalitarianism" that left no room for dissent.

Stoen hopes to attract idealistic young attorneys to his organization.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY _____ DATE _____
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE _____
TS AUTH. _____ PAGE(S) _____
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED ☐ DECLASSIFIABLE ☐
RELEASED WITH EXCISIONS ☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS _____